

### ISLAM

## True purpose of life is beyond self

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

A person attains his highest distinction only when he leads a purposeful life. Such a life characterizes the most advanced stage of human development. Without doubt arranging for one's food, clothes and habitation are sure tasks that one has to perform in this world; but this is a level of purposefulness in which men and animals, being concerned only with bare survival, are equal. A human being's life becomes purposeful only when it goes beyond common animalism and takes the form of superior humanism.

It is in this unique conceptual quality of a human being that we can conceive of what his higher purpose in life should be. Thus a person's true purpose in life can only be one which reflects the higher side of his personality.

If one pauses at this stage to take note of what the Quran has to say, one will find that it gives us clear guidance in this matter. The purpose in life has been explained in the Quran in the following words: "I created the jinn and mankind only so that they might worship Me: I seek no sustenance from them, nor do I want them to feed Me -- it is God who is the great Sustainer, the Mighty One, the Invincible." (51:56-57)

These verses specify man's purpose in life as worship. God does not demand of you a livelihood, the verse states; rather He himself is responsible of your livelihood. This means that worship of God is a purpose which is motivated neither by inward desires nor outward influences. Rather it comes into being through thought alone. Only when a person goes beyond his self and his environment can he understand that there is a higher purpose on which he should focus his life.

To determine the purpose of life is, in short, the effort to make life meaningful. It must surely, therefore, be one which is in accordance with a human being's unique status.